



**Town of Sidney - Economic Advisory Committee
MINUTES
October 23, 2020 – 10:30 am Zoom Meeting**

Present: Brad Edgett - Chair, Councillor Chad Rintoul, Mayor Cliff McNeil-Smith, Annilee Armstrong, David Calveley, Alyssa Gerwing, Stasia Hartley (phone), Rod Hunchak, Deanna Mathewson, Doug Walker, Denny Warner

Regrets: Frank Austin, Jennifer Michelle

Staff: Randy Humble - CAO, Andrew Hicik – Director of Corporate Services, Paula – Recording Clerk

1. Meeting called to order by the Chair at 10:30 am

2. Review and approval of the September 25, 2020 Minutes

Moved by A. Armstrong, seconded by A. Gerwing, that the Agenda be approved as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Review and approval of the September 25, 2020 Minutes

Moved by D. Warner, seconded by A. Gerwing, that the Minutes be approved as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Referral from Special Council Meeting of October 19, 2020

Business Support Project:

That the Task Force recommends that Council approves providing a budget of \$30,000 to a working group of the EAC to be used as they see necessary to contract, survey, and report on how businesses can be supported in response, resiliency and recovery and to implement actions that come out of the survey within the budget.

Long-term Economic Strategy:

That Council task the EAC with preparing and implementing a long-term economic strategy following a detailed planning tool to develop road map.

Councillor Rintoul read off the motions referred by Council from the COVID Recovery Task Force. He provided an overview of Council's discussion noting that there was no consensus amongst Council.

The Chair called for comments from each member:

D. Calveley: reiterated that the idea evolved at Task Force and provided a brief overview of his presentation to Council in regards to the proposed projects.

A. Gerwing: feels the EAC should have a role to play but noted that the EAC is an advisory group made up of busy people who may not have the time to commit. She does not agree with undertaking a long-term strategy at this time.

A. Armstrong: agreed that the EAC should have a role but cautioned that it should not overlap with the work of the Chamber and BIA. Long-term planning is not appropriate at this time.

D. Mathewson: watched the council discussion and felt there were at least two Councillors not comfortable with the proposed projects. Staff acknowledged that the Town does not have the money available in the economic development fund. She also agrees that a long-term strategy is not appropriate at this time. She suggested the EAC come to council with recommendations based on direction from the Chamber who would have connections.

R. Hunchak: agreed with conducting a survey to start things off as everyone is working in the dark at this moment and a survey may shed some light on businesses priorities. The Airport has scrapped long-term planning and is looking ahead only in months or next quarter. Going beyond a survey would have no value.

D. Walker: watched the council meeting discussion and felt they did not have clear direction. The projects are not within the mandate of the ToR for the EAC, which is an advisory committee. No details are provided in regards to budget and he has concerns about the EAC managing a significant budget. Does not support the EAC taking this on but appreciates the idea and does support a re-survey of the initial survey conducted by the EOC with additional questions added if needed. Agrees with other members that a long-term plan is not practical at this time.

D. Warner: noted that we are in flux and things are constantly changing. Some businesses are doing well and we should let the market adjust before developing any long-term strategy. When doing the initial survey they had intended to resurvey. The first survey was done shortly after the pandemic hit and about 70% stated they had been impacted. Denny noted that original survey was an EOC function.

S. Hartley: everything is changing very quickly. Agrees to re-survey and possibly again in February. Feels full impacts on businesses and community will not be recognizable until spring 2021. Suggests it could be within the EAC's mandate.

B. Edgett: concerned that the timing is not right and we do not have the appropriate terms of reference. He supports a re-survey and suggested that the Chamber and BIA collaborate. The resurvey should ask the same questions and possibly add some new questions. In regards to timing, the Chamber and BIA should determine this.

Councillor Rintoul: thanked everyone for their thoughtful comments. He supports a resurvey for comparatives along with new questions for gaining new insights. Not certain of timing due to the upcoming holiday season. In regards to long-term strategy, he feels the Town should hire a consultant if the Town feels it is necessary and funds are available; and that the EAC should maintain advisory role.

R. Humble: expressed concerns about conducting a survey at this time due to ongoing COVID restrictions and survey fatigue. Businesses were appreciative of the initial survey but if a resurvey is conducted, consider timing and impact on the businesses community. Also expressed concerns about taking on a long-term economic strategy at this time due to the significant work currently happening in

regards to the OCP review, which has a high level of community engagement. Reaching out now to conduct a long-term strategy is not good timing.

A. Hicik: noted that businesses are currently in survival mode and questioned how much will they want to engage in a survey at this time. He suggested the EAC may oversee and coordinate a long-term strategy and that this should be a budget item in 2021 or 2022. \$30,000 is a large sum to request for year-end. There is \$5,000 unallocated in the economic development fund, which could be used to compensate the BIA and Chamber to undertake the resurvey.

In response to Council's referrals, the EAC made the following recommendations:

Long-term Economic Strategy:

Move by D. Calveley, seconded by D. Walker, that the EAC recommend that the Town allow an appropriate budget to work with a contractor to develop a long-term economic strategy in 2021.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Business Support Project:

Moved by D. Walker, seconded by R. Hunchak, that the Town work in conjunction with the BIA and the Chamber to facilitate a follow up survey of businesses using the remaining \$5,000 in the economic development fund and that the survey will be conducted during the first quarter of 2021.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. Roundtable Discussion:

A. Gerwing - SEAG: noted that the BIA's Halloween Spooktacular has been organized with several community organizations and businesses taking part. A drive-in movie night at the Winspear Centre sold out in 8 minutes. ArtSea is coordinating "eye lanterns" for Halloween and the Museum is conducting a jack-o-lantern hunt. Christmas has not yet been announced. Events are still happening in Sidney with social distancing protocols in place.

A. Armstrong – homebased business: nothing to report at this time.

D. Mathews – Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre (Aquarium): participating in the Halloween Spooktacular event. They are offering a discount for people in costume. They have booked six local artisans for pop up shops. Groups are slowly returning to the centre and they are hosting groups on the days the centre is closed.

D. Warner left at 11:36

D. Walker – Chamber: the Chamber is trying to decide how to conduct crystal awards this year so that it is more than just an online Zoom event. The AGM is at the end of November. **Business Sector:** things have not changed that much. Travel and hospitality are still struggling – some have closed their doors permanently. Businesses dealing with anything virtual are very busy, this part of the economy is boomin

R. Hunchak – Airport: Flair Airlines will discontinue operating at the end of November (Victoria to Vancouver). Fickle Fig is moving into the Starbucks space. Passenger numbers are down 80% and have

steadied at this rate. CEO Geoff Dickson is working with other airports to secure support for the industry.

D. Calveley – resident at large: noted a project he has been working on has executives working from home.

S. Hartley - service: anticipating a busy season with focus on keeping people safe. They have almost double the number of flu shots requested in past.

Councillor Rintoul: thanked the Committee for the good work on Council’s recommendation. His company moving the Vancouver office to Sidney and they are conducting the strategic planning in person in Sidney, which represents confidence in the community and its safety plan.

R. Humble - CAO: advised that Council has approved their revised Strategic Plan for 2021-2022 and provided a brief update on the OCP process, which is now into phase 2. It will include a charrette on key design ideas.

B. Edgett – BIA: meeting with the hoteliers and working on focusing on snowbirds that normally go to the US to bring them here. Also working with Tourism Vancouver Island. Hotel numbers are starting to increase. There is a lot of filming happening across the CRD and locally. Working with local individuals to offer free delivery of goods and services. Secured driver and businesses. Committed to \$10,000 to the initiative from the BIA. **Winspear:** thank you to the Town for their support. Remembrance Day will be hosted at the Winspear with limited numbers and will be livestreamed from the Winspear’s Facebook Page. Still going ahead with a concert series and will be shooting live for the Toronto jazz festival.

6. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

Chair

Date